



# Uses and abuses of using cinema in the classroom

## Teaching 20th Century Latin American History through Film

### MAIN OBJECTIVE:

To analyze possible uses and abuses of using cinema to teach history and social sciences.

### SECONDARY OBJECTIVES:

- a) Students think about their own learning process;
- b) Students are able to analyze movies as a particular historical source.

### DATA:

Weekly or bi-weekly reflection journals on history, historiography and cinema. Other analytical writings to situate the movie within historical periods. This research is based in the course HST201: Historical Methods and Skills, section 002. Fifteen students (out of seventeen) have given consent to participate.

### TEACHING QUESTIONS:

What are the benefits and perils of using cinema to teach history and the social sciences? How do students respond to the use of audiovisual artifacts in their learning process?

### TEACHING GOALS:

- a) To introduce students to a historical source and how it is analyzed;
- b) To analyze the efficacy of using cinema as a pedagogical tool;
- c) To encourage the development of a interdisciplinary imagination.

### ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK:

Four uses of cinema on the classroom; as:

- a) palpable historical events;
- b) examples of ideological constructions;
- c) representations of social reality(ies); and
- d) depictions of faraway lands and cultures.

Movies are analyzed as representatives of a dialectical historical time; the historical time the movie represents and the historical time the movie was made.

### FILMS:

- *Like water for chocolate* (México)
- *A man of principle* (Colombia)
- *In the time of butterflies* (Dom. Rep.)
- *Strawberry and Chocolate* (Cuba)
- *The official story* (Arg.)
- *Machuca* (Chile)
- *Innocent voices* (El Salvador)

### QUOTES:

*Film as sources for History:* "Being able to use film to represent and remember such powerful occurrences in history is a way to look at the past in a way that one might not have been able to see as clearly through a different literary medium. Even though the film used fictional characters, the message that was transmitted through the film was real and represents an important, real, historical source."

*Films and histories:* "This film encourages the viewer to explore their own histories whether they are personal, national, or from the memory."

"I have come to the realization that ...movies, are ideal resources for history. Although, [they] can only be historically relevant if you know what the event is "

### CONCLUSION:

- a) Cinema helps introduce students to history of unknown regions or topics.
- b) Students are able to be reflexive regarding their understanding of history and method.

**Acknowledgements:** RCAH Fellowship Program; Dr. Mark Sullivan; HST201-002 Spring 2011 students

Cristián Doña-Reveco; Department of Sociology and Department of History, MSU



Basado en...  
Con Isabela Coro...  
Ramiro Corzo, Luis...  
Victor Morant, Manuel Pachón, Carlos Parada, Humberto Quintero,  
Producción: Procinor Ltda. Dirección: Francisco Norden.